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Debate charges can blur facts

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WASHINGTON — The facts often got lost or were misused in the debate Sunday night between President Reagan and Walter F. Mondale. Reagan, for example, accused Mondale of advocating "unilateral disarmament," something Mondale has not advocated.

Mondale, on the other hand, sought to pin direct responsibility on Reagan for a CIA-sponsored manual that condones political assassinations in Nicaragua. He asked: "How can ... the President of the United States ... say he didn't know?"

Although the full story behind the production of the Nicaragua manual is unclear, there is no evidence that Reagan knew anything about it until, as the White House says, he read about it last week in the newspapers.

In fact, Adm. Stansfield Turner, the CIA director in the Carter-Mondale administration, said yesterday that he doubted that CIA Director William J. Casey, much less the President, had been aware of the manual before it became a public issue last week.

Following is an examination of some controversial statements made in the debate:

National defense. Reagan charged that Mondale favored a policy of "unilateral disarmament, of weakness, if you will." He said that was also the policy of the Carter-Mondale administration.

To support his charge, Reagan said Mondale "was against the F-14 fighter, he was against the M-1 tank, he was against the B-1 bomber, he wanted to cut the salaries of the military, he wanted to bring home half of the American forces in Europe ..."

Later, Reagan said that Mondale had made a campaign commercial standing on the deck of the aircraft carrier Nimitz to suggest "an image of strength" but that there would not have been any Nimitz if Mondale had had his way, because "he was against it."

The record shows that some of Reagan's specific statements are true, but his overall charge that Mondale favors "unilateral disarmament" is not.

Mondale himself pointed out in the debate that he supported several major new weapons systems: the air-launched cruise missile, the ground-launched cruise missile, the Pershing missile, the Trident submarine, the D-5 submarine missile warhead, the Stealth advanced bomber technology and the Midgetman missile.

Furthermore, the current defense buildup began during the Carter-Mondale administration. Pentagon documents show that there was an increase of at least 1,200 U.S. nuclear warheads, from about 8,000 to 9,200, between 1977 and 1980. Mondale said about 2,000 more warheads had been added since Reagan took office.

During the Carter administration, the United States also deployed a new nuclear submarine, the Trident, and made rapid strides toward the development of new cruise missiles. There were also substantial improvements in the accuracy of nuclear weapons and other technological advances.

Mondale did oppose the F-14 fighter in its early stages, but he said in the debate it was because "the plane wasn't flying the way it was supposed to." He still opposes the B-1 bomber and the MX missile on the ground that they cannot accomplish their mission.

The CIA manual. Reagan's account in the debate of what happened to the CIA manual differs from an explanation by a Nicaraguan rebel leader, Edgar Chamorro, who was interviewed over the weekend.

Reagan said that the manual was written "by a gentleman down in Nicaragua" on contract to the CIA, who turned it over to a CIA station chief somewhere in Central America, who deleted some passages.

The CIA station chief then sent it on to CIA headquarters in Washington, which deleted other passages. But "some way or other," Reagan said, "12 of the original copies" got out and were reprinted without the

kind of editing the CIA wanted.

Chamorro said the anti-Sandinista rebels had cut out two pages of the original manual but had left in a section urging "selective use of violence" and instructions on how to "neutralize" Sandinista officials. "Neutralize" is the CIA's way of saying killing.

Congressional sources have disclosed that a weekly Defense Intelligence Agency report in 1982 also told of rebel activities, including "the assassination of minor government officials and a Cuban adviser."

Nuclear freeze. Mondale was unable to respond specifically to a reporter's question about how the United States could verify Soviet compliance with a nuclear freeze, a key Mondale proposal. "What is going to be frozen?" the reporter asked, in view of the difficulty of verifying increasingly sophisticated weapons.

In the debate, Mondale merely repeated his well-worn campaign promise that, "I will not agree to any arms control agreement, including a freeze, that's not verifiable."

Mondale's promise is suspect, however, since both the United States and the Soviet Union have begun to deploy sea-launched cruise missiles on ships of various types.

Mondale seemed to be trying to make an impression for political purposes that a nuclear freeze could be achieved easily and quickly, when experts believe that the task would be extremely difficult.